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ABSTRACT

The edited transcript of an informal panel discussion about discourse conducted by the Discourse Linguistics Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association is presented in this pamphlet. The transcript also includes comments by the chairperson and by audience members. Among the topics covered in the discussion are the distinction between content and packaging, pronominalization, child language, cross-cultural conversational skills, and kinesiology. (FL)

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DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AS AN EXTENSION OF LINGUISTICS: A COLLOQUY

William J. Russell, editor

ABSTRACT

A transcript of a panel discussion conducted by the Discourse Linguistics Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association at the group's first meeting in San Francisco, April 21, 1976 is presented. The five participants discuss their research and perspectives on discourse study.

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DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AS AN EXTENSION OF LINGUISTICS: A COLLOQUY

William J. Russell, editor

What follows is the substance of an informal panel discussion about "discourse" held under the auspices of the Discourse Linguistics Special Interest Group of the American Educational Reseach Association at its annual meeting in April, 1976. This material was edited from a tape recording of the meeting. Participants were asked only to make informal presentations attempting to define their own concern with discourse and thus exhibiting a few of the diverse approaches to this area of concern present within the membership. Each participant was given an opportunity to edit his contribution, and some chose to do more editing than others. The result was recombined with comments by the Chair and with audience participation. The end product appears to fairly reflect the substance and enthusiasm of the discussion. Participating in the discussion were:

William J. Russell, Chair:	SWRL Educational Research and Development, Los Alamitos, California
Wallace Chafe:	University of California, Berkeley
Charles R. Stratton:	University of Idaho
Thelma Weeks:	Center for Cross Cultural Research, Palo Alto, California
William Rutherford:	American Language Institute, University of Southern California

PANEL DISCUSSION

WILLIAM RUSSELL (Chair address to panel and audience members): Over the last several years an increasing amount of scholarly attention has been devoted to the development of language models which attempt to explain how people communicate. Linguistics, psychology, as well as philosophy and other fields which confront the phenomenon of language, have found that it is necessary to talk about language in terms which reach beyond the customary grammarian's analysis of word classes, syntactic structures, and those fragments of semantics which pertain to sentences in isolation. The ability to string together sentences--and meanings--in a way that is internally consistent and consonant with the interloculors' mental representation of the world and its workings, amid the welter of alternate possible verbalizations and the ever present hazard of incomprehension, we may call "discourse ability."

The present Discourse Linguistics Group (we now have over one hundred members) began with a mailing from me in March 1975 in which I referred to the interest of a small nucleus of linguists at SWRL in building a broad-based forum for an exchange of ideas and information with others who have similar interests. We did not want to limit the scope of interest where that would mean turning away from some interesting and possibly fruitful line of inquiry, but we did hope to focus interest on the linguistic aspect of discourse study. We have received a large number of enthusiastic letters supporting the endeavor, and have acquired a membership which is impressive both in size and quality.

It may be helpful to begin by briefly describing where SWRL's interest in "discourse ability" comes from, since the motivation for organizing this group began there. SWRL (located in Los Alamitos, California) is a nonprofit agency dedicated to research and development in education. It is national in scope. The programs it develops include a number of instructional systems in communication skills, plus bilingual/bicultural instructional systems, and dialect-fair instruction. In our research it has become clear that much of the success or failure of the individual student in school depends on his acquiring the capacity to "do" discourse, that is, to produce and interpret language which is shaped to serve particular informative and expressive ends, not merely from the standpoint of basic grammatical correctness relative to a norm, but also in terms of expectations regarding discourse-organizational pattern, explicitness of assertions, control of implications and ambiguities, awareness of paraphrase relations, use of linguistic "shortcuts" such as deletion and pronominalization, types of subordination or embedding, flexibility in lexicalizations, and so forth. To the extent that these aspects of "discourse ability" can be studied as linguistic problems, those of us at SWRL who are linguists feel obliged to consider them within our SWRL designated research activities.

Now let's turn to our panelists and find out what similar interests they may have and what they are currently doing about those interests.

WALLACE CHAFE: My approach for the last few years [to discourse investigation] has been to think about a person who is involved in a conversation and who remembers something which he thinks is worth telling the other person about--an accident, trip, etc. What are some of the processes that go on in this person's mind when he has to turn this interesting event into language? Eventually he comes out with words, sentences, and paragraphs that communicate more or less what he experienced earlier and what he remembers about it to the other person.

I think there are <u>three</u> major kinds of processes that the teller-relator of the experience has to apply:

(1) The organization of <u>content</u> in a way that is felicitous to communication.

(2) Packaging, i.e., wrapping up the content in a way that will allow it to be assimilated most easily by the person he's talking to.

(3) Syntax--following the rules of your language; putting words in the right order. If you are speaking Japanese, you put the verb at the end; if you are speaking English, you tend to put the verb in the middle of the sentence and so on. This also includes things like agreement; the verb should agree with the subject in number, or whatever. Syntax is what linguists have been traditionally most interested in and what I am at the present time least interested in--I won't say any more about that. I will say a few things about organizing both content and packaging.

Under the heading of content we can make three subdivisions:

(1) Recall, in a sense, comes in a unit, e.g., "my trip to Denver." But, although you can give it a name like, "my trip to Denver," that doesn't tell the other person a great deal about the trip. In order to tell this to the other person you have to break it down into smaller parts. We can talk about chunks out of memory--chunks of content.

(2) We seem to break larger chunks into smaller ones. Chunking is hierarchical.

(3) In breaking down larger chunks we interpret them as instances of frames, or schemas, or stereotyped patterns that we have in our heads. For example, regarding "my trip to Denver" we remember, grossly speaking, (1) going there, (2) things I did there, and (3) coming back. Of these perhaps (2) is the most interesting, but there is this overall schema for a trip which involves going there and doing things there and coming back.

In order to make these observations about content more concrete, let me refer to some personal narratives that we collected in one of my classes about a year ago. These stories had to do with "hassles," e.g., frustrating experiences with the bureaucracy on a university campus. You might want to do something called declaring a double major or an independent major or something like that. You might go to the Department secretary. She'd tell you, "I can't do much about that, you'll have to see your advisor," and you would go to your advisor and the advisor would say, "I can't do much about that. You have to go to the Dean's office." You go to the Dean's office and they'd say, "Well, you

have to fill out this form and bring it back next week." You bring the form back next week and they say, "Well, you have to have an interview with the Provost," and so on. Eventually there is some kind of satisfactory or unsatisfactory resolution, usually unsatisfactory. But it looks as though there is a general pattern for these "hassle" experiences or "runaround" experiences [which organizes content into three subdivisions as follows]:

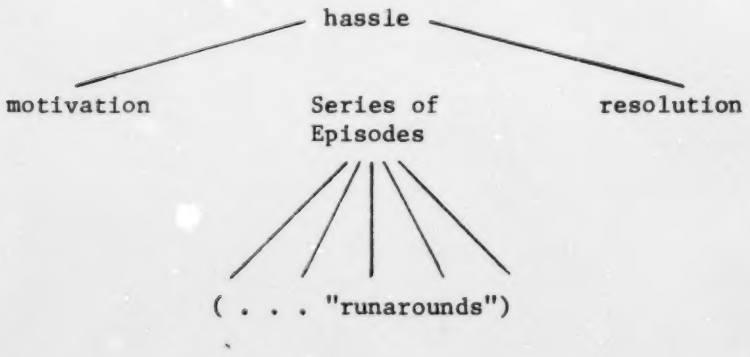
(1) Motivation

(2) Series of episodes (which we could call "runarounds")

(3) Resolution

The typical episode ["runaround"] begins with going to an office and usually waiting for a period of time and then finally getting to see the functionary there, stating your purpose. At this point comes the height of a "runaround," which is being told that you can't do that here at this time and either being deflected to another office or being told to come back at a later time. [This "runaround" concludes with] leaving and then going to the next office and having the same thing happen over again.

There seems to be a stereotyped pattern that narratives about "hassles" conform to. It seems that you remember a "hassle" in these terms:



You say why you want to get something done, then you have a series of these "runarounds," and then there is some kind of resolution at the end. People remember not only problems with the University administration in that way but also things like trying to return something in a department store.

I believe that eventually these frames or schemas [the three part "hassle" schema and the chronological reports of episodes] are going to turn out to be rather interesting because I think that a lot of our daily behavior conforms to these patterns and we remember things according

to these patterns and we tell about them according to these patterns--and these patterns are likely to be different from one culture to another in some way. For example, I have been told that although in Western European culture and American culture we tend to tell about these things in chronological order, in Southeast Asia there seems to be a different organizational principle which may be a spatial one or one which involves taking the most important thing first then going down to the less important or filling in the details. This Southeast Asian organizational framework is not entirely clear to me at present, but at least it seems not to be chronological. Western Europeans and Americans usually start by summarizing: "I'm going to tell you about my trip to Denver" or "I'm going to tell you how I constructed a something or other." It seems that in Japanese you don't start that way but build up through a series of details to a final conclusion so in a sense the summary is at the end rather than at the beginning. I think that [culture specific frameworks for organizing content] are going to turn out to be significant not only for how we tell about things, but also for how we lead our lives.

There does seem to be a point in this process where you arrive at a level of material suitable for expressing in a sentence, which in a way is your aim: to break down the larger experience into smaller parts until the parts are the right size to express in sentences. [The point in the content organization process where this is achieved] of course, depends on your purpose and to some extent the resources your language makes available. At that point, there is a smallest level of schema beyond which you have to decide what individuals and objects, people and things, you are going to talk about within this event (this "event" may be the "episode" or "runaround" which was earlier described as one of a series of such events sandwiched between motivation and resolution). Just as you had to make choices about what to include in arriving at this event from the larger experience, at this point you have to decide on what people and objects you will mention as taking part in the event.

As an example of the selection of individuals and objects in reporting an event, an easy case to talk about is what one might call a "transaction schema"--a matter of somebody buying or selling something to somebody. There seem to be four kinds of objects and people necessarily involved:

(1) the buyer (person starting with money and ending up without it)

(2) the seller (starts with object to be sold and ends up without it)

(3) the object (which is exchanged)

(4) the money (which is exchanged)

Fillmore recently has been using the term "perspective" for choosing which of these objects and people to talk about at this stage. For instance, if you say, "Joan bought a pretzel," you are putting your focus on the buyer, Joan, and the object, a pretzel, and treating them in this particular relationship. If you say, "Harry sold Joan a pretzel," for some reason you are taking a different perspective on the event. You might instead choose to say, "Joan paid a quarter," or, "Harry charged her a quarter." So there are always various combinations of objects and people you might decide to take advantage of one way or another at this stage.

I like the term "framing" here because we talk about framing a sentence, for example, traditionally, and what's involved here seems to be choosing what elements to include in a sentence and particularly what relations to give those elements--whether you want to treat Joan as the agent of something or beneficiary of something and the like.

Having done that [i.e., having selected a "frame" with objects, people and their relations] there seems to be one other kind of process that is necessary--choosing the words to use to express your idea of Joan or of the pretzel or whatever. Different objects you have in mind will have different degrees of "codability" in the sense that they are easier or harder to put into language. For example, things that are easy to talk about:

> This is a glass.
>
> This is a table.

things that are harder to talk about (low in codability):

> "I'd like one of those plastic things that you put inside a wallet to put credit cards in."

There are any number of ways you might express the latter and you might have some trouble getting it across.

So under organization of content we identify these processes:

(1) dividing larger chunks into smaller chunks according to an overall schema

(2) framing (deciding what objects to talk about and what roles to give them at the sentence level)

(3) choosing words to express ideas about objects and events within these frames (codability)

Now let us move from content to packaging. It appears to be important for a speaker to make some assessment as to what the listener can process and how he can process it at any particular time. This involves a number of different kinds of things that a speaker has to do:

(1) The difference between new/given information: Here, the speaker is trying to assess what is in the consciousness of his hearer at this particular point and with some changes this applies to written stuff as well. What he thinks the listener is already thinking about at this point he is likely to pronominalize and pronounce with lower pitch and various things associated with so called "old" information. "Old" and "new" hasn't to do with what the hearer actually knows. For example, "I saw your sister yesterday," has "your sister" as "new information," but you probably know your sister. I seem to be assuming you are not thinking about your sister at this very moment and I am introducing her into your consciousness at that point.

(2) Use of the definite article has to do with whether you think the thing is identifiable in this context.

(3) Choice of the subject of a sentence has to do with where you think attention is focused at this moment in the discourse.

(4) "Point of view" is an old notion in literary criticism but has just hit linguistics recently. It is not clear to me what "point of view" involves but it does seem to be a relevant factor which may be independent of these others.

All of the above come under packaging in the sense that they are not so much how you organize the content--the message itself--but rather how you wrap it up and where you use pronouns and where you use the definite article--that sort of thing--in order to lubricate the process of getting this information into the other person's mind the most easily.

WILLIAM RUSSELL: Speaking of given/new distinction, you've talked of lower pitch, pronominalization, etc.--things which indicate old information. How likely, at present point, do you think it is that an investigator could take a set of sentences and actually determine what is given/new in those sentences from the characteristics of their realizations? Are these enough surface criteria to go by?

WALLACE CHAFE: In written sentences it's pronominalization, mainly.

WILLIAM RUSSELL: I'm thinking of spoken sentences simply because there's more to go by.

WALLACE CHAFE: Yes. With spoken sentences you can look at the intonation too. Now, of course, this [given/new] isn't the only factor involved in intonation. It's an extremely complex thing but one of the things involved in intonation is the low pitch which comes from being given information and I think it's fairly consistent that anything that's given will be pronounced with low pitch. It's not as consistent that it will be pronominalized because you can use a full noun phrase for given stuff under the right circumstances. Now one always mentions contrastive examples like:

> "I didn't know you were responsible." Where you has high pitch and stress but I think, almost on principle, you is always given because you're both conscious of each other when you're in a conversation.

WILLIAM RUSSELL: Then that particular high stress is a different sort of high stress.

WALLACE CHAFE: Yes, because you mean you (direct) rather than somebody else.

WILLIAM RUSSELL: Do you think that there's actually a physical difference between that kind of high stress and the kind that . . .

WALLACE CHAFE: Yes. Well, there are two possibilities. One is that [contrastive pitch] is always higher--has more "umph" behind it--than just the new information one. I don't think that's necessarily true, but when it is, I think that's because of an additional emotional component that's often associated with contrastiveness. "You of all things/people." Also [contrastive stress] has to have a falling pitch whereas sometimes new information doesn't have falling pitch.

WILLIAM RUSSELL: I, at one time, had a Yoruba informant--Yoruba being a tone language--and he seemed to quickly recognize this English difference by saying, "Oh yes, that's falling pitch" (which is a Yoruba pitch allophone). He had learned to hear the phonetic realizations of pitch in his language quite reliably and, transfering this to English, it seemed obvious to him that in contrastive stress we use falling pitch, while in this other kind of stress--whatever it is--it's not falling pitch. I am still skeptical about finding reliable physical correlations of new information in the speech signal, however. I would say (maybe from what you have said) we can be rather sure that low pitch on a sentence element means that at least this element of the sentence is given, not new. But it still seems to me that the other way around we might have more trouble. If we find that there is high pitch we might not know the scope of what's new. And we might not have any objective way of sorting out emotional, contrastive and other reasons for intonational stress.

WALLACE CHAFE: It's complicated also in longer noun phrases. For instance, coordinate things, "I met John and Harry yesterday," John and Harry are both new, but the high pitch just comes at the end of the phrase.

WILLIAM RUSSELL: Then would you agree that for new information the pitch doesn't come on the whole thing and you can't really tell the scope of "new," but where there is something essential to the sentence which has low pitch on it, we can at least know that that element is given?

WALLACE CHAFE: Right. You have to be aware that the high pitch may come only at the end of a phrase which is entirely new.

WILLIAM RUSSELL: But associated with that high pitch will be some part of a unitary phenomenon?

WALLACE CHAFE: Yes, like a noun phrase.

WILLIAM RUSSELL: (solicits questions.)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: It seems to me that linguists as a group for a long time ignored Chomsky's notion that linguistics was a subsection of general cognitive psychology. It's getting so you're flirting more with the whole cognitive system of the organism, in talking about language, and yet you've managed to separate content as you presented it today from the total knowledge system of the speaker. How long can we maintain that?

WALLACE CHAFE: I don't think it is separate. I think it's all one bag really. I think the only difference between linguistics and psychology is the difference in the things people do. For historical reasons day-to-day research of linguists is of a different nature than that of psychologists.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So when you're considering discourse do you have to consider whether the speaker can be, in fact, aware of what his listener is aware of? I happen to be interested in developmental psycholinguistics and at each age level you're going to have a different kind of discourse analysis because the speaker at one age level is not going to give a damn whether his listener is aware of what he's aware of, where later on you're going to get big differences in the function of the speaker.

WALLACE CHAFE: That's certainly true. That's noticeable in this packaging area, but it comes in in the content area, too, as you suggest.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: It certainly comes in with adults, college professors, lectures, students, etc., without any apparent awareness.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: In packaging your answer to me, I want to let you know that I am totally naive to what you're talking about. Why did you choose this to think about? This problem you presented of how people bring up events in conversation . . .

WALLACE CHAFE: It has always seemed to me that if you divide the study of language into studying production/comprehension--for instance, people producing and understanding things linguistically--production ought to be studied first. What the comprehender is doing is sort of trying to unravel what the other guy did, so we ought to know what the other guy was doing first.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Is that sort of distinct from what most linguists do? Do they study comprehension?

WALLACE CHAFE: Well, there's a sense in which generative transformational grammar has been concerned with production, but usually a responsible theoretician would deny that that's what they are doing in generating sentences by transformational rules and so on. They're not really trying to simulate/model what a producer of a discourse act is doing psychologically. They're doing something else which I can't fathom; it's beyond me to understand what they are doing. The people who have been interested in psychological processes have generally, in recent years at least, concentrated on comprehension pretty much, e.g., when given a text, how people understand what's in that text. I'm interested in the same kinds of things: what's going on psychologically, but from the point of view of the person who produces the text in the first place.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I was very interested in the sequencing of the events. [Between] motivation and the resolution statements there is a sequencing of events that exactly parallels the time ordering in which they occur. In my observation, storytelling may be the same kind of thing. [But] I can remember my grandparents and the older generation who used to use something closer to the literary forms, where they might start close to the climax of a story and then work backwards. I see less of this today. Do you notice any of those departures or any of the attempts to get stylistics into it?

WALLACE CHAFE: It depends on whether this is an experienced story teller or whether it's a person who just remembered something that happened a month ago. With the latter, at least among Americans, the things to do is [to proceed] in chronological order. The experienced storyteller will have devices which may vary from one teller to another. We're trying to look into things like this across cultures and hope to find some interesting difference there.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Why did you avoid remarks about syntax? Do you accept the transformational distinction between the subject matter of transformational syntax and "matters of performance?" What is your view of syntax as distinct from packaging and content?

WALLACE CHAFE: It is a complex thing, I think. What I really had in mind for the syntax were things that were arbitrary in a language, things that you had to do and had no choice about. Producing discourse is being creative in lots of ways, for instance, organizing the content and doing this packaging thing. But there are some things one has to do that just are not creative at all, e.g., putting as "s" on the end of a present tense, third person verb in English. That's what I meant by syntax--just following these arbitrary rules that the language has. A lot of the things that are really interesting syntactically get tied in with these other things and are impossible to separate. I think there's been a gradual recognition that a lot of the things that were thought to be purely syntax earlier are motivated by content or packaging considerations. My suspicion is that there will be very little left over when we get down to the things that are totally arbitrary and don't involve any decisions by the speaker at all--and that's a fairly small amount of the total picture.

THELMA WEEKS: When English teachers talk about discourse I suppose they're usually talking about writing, or someone's written passage, but when child language researchers, such as myself, talk about discourse we're talking about speech. If you're talking about child speech, there appear to be two obvious categories:

(1) speech that is self-directed

(2) speech that is directed to someone else

The fact that there is another person in the room does not determine whether or not the child is talking to himself. Sometimes the child talks to himself when others are present. In fact Piaget maintains that children do generally talk to themselves up to about age 7. The child feels other people don't listen, comprehend or respond. Then of course there are other times when the child is very obviously talking to himself, as when Ruth Weir's son, Anthony, had his bedtime soliloquies, she did a discourse analysis on them, now a classic in child language. On the other hand, Elinor Keenen is one who has been looking at child language discourse and has found that children as young as 2 years old do pay close attention to the speech of other children. A number of child language researchers now have been looking at this and have found that children are developing conversational skills at very early ages. Colwyn Trevarthen, at the University of Edinburg, maintains that children have conversations much earlier. He wrote a paper entitled "Conversations with a Two-Month-Old." He talks of findings that a 2-month old baby was responding consistently differently to objects and to persons. In 1971 David Crystal said that discourse was a vogue subject. Child language researchers have been looking at various aspects of discourse in young children. First thing people are interested in is, when do children start acquiring these skills? What are some of the requirements for acquiring conversational skills? Are there some children who really don't acquire good conversational skills and what are the differences in different cultures?

I have been principally interested in the differences in conversational skills across cultures because I have been working on the Yakima Indian Reservation since 1968 with preschool and school children. Although the children are monolingual in English, the teachers maintained they (the children) had a language problem. I have determined that they do have something of a dialect which may be making a problem for the teachers. Though the children were mainly monolingual in English, most of the parent-generation adults are bilingual. English for the parents became the imposed language through schooling, so they have insisted that their children speak English to eliminate language learning problems such as they had encountered. As a means of offering topics for conversation, I took a pile of color pictures and asked the children to find some pictures they would like to talk about. There are ways that a conversation of this sort differs from ordinary conversation:

(1) The child has more control over the topic.

(2) The pictures offer a means to change the topic. The child can change topics many times during the course of the interview.

(3) Also there were things I thought I couldn't do with the discourse analysis because the children were inclined to use a lot of demonstrative and personal pronouns because they would be pointing to the picture.

Twelve Yakima children and 12 white children from Yakima and the Palo Alto area were recorded. Since the Yakima teachers had mentioned specifically that the children didn't seem to be able to answer questions, I looked intently at this aspect of our conversations. At the child language research forum at Stanford University, Phillip Dale mentioned that children were very reluctant to say "I don't know," in response to a question. I have also found this to be the case with the five children whose language development I have been following. I thought answering questions would offer some cultural differences. From casual conversation with Yakimas, I had found they don't guess when they're in doubt, as non-Indians in our culture are inclined to do. Second is the matter of whether or not they asked questions. Elliot Mischler has suggested that question asking constitutes an important role in controlling a conversation. The third issue was whether or not the children would assume a great deal of shared knowledge that didn't exist. William Labov has discussed how important shared knowledge is in discourse analysis. He says speakers habitually do use statements to ask for confirmation. How is it that we recognize these statements as requests for confirmation and not assertions? The fourth thing was volunteered or "new" information. Some observations during interviews of how the children didn't answer questions were:

(1) Periods of long pausing when answering questions

(2) The children did not answer the questions because they were continuing their own train of thought

(3) The children answered questions not asked

Overall, the children did answer questions appropriately, added "new" information, and developed conversation very much like adults. However, (1) totaling instances of the reply "I don't know," the Yakima children numbered 12 times where the non-Indian children didn't use the reply at all; (2) there were substantially more cases where the Yakima children avoided answering a question or remained silent; (3) the Yakima children were quick to ask for clarification if they hadn't understood a question; (4) the non-Indian (but not the Yakima) children regularly corrected me if I misunderstood them.

Everything I found points to the conclusion that the Yakima children have well developed conversational skills, with the few differences resulting from experience and cultural background. These need to be recognized as such rather than being thought of as differences in intelligence or general capability. While these findings are only tentative they are in the nature of differences in discourse patterns that classroom teachers need to be alert to.

WILLIAM RUSSELL: I wonder if part of what you were saying was supposed to be a direct response to the teachers' view that these children were language handicapped?

THELMA WEEKS: Right. I couldn't find they were handicapped in any way except in the classroom where the children were the "typical, silent Indian child."

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Following on that did you discuss your findings with the teacher?

THELMA WEEKS: I haven't because I haven't been back up there since. But I have discussed my findings at various other times, but they (teachers) were really not interested. Teachers' attitudes seem to be that they (the Yakima children) have got to learn to like us, e.g., this is the classroom situation and they have to learn to adjust. A suggestion I always have is if classrooms were more informal or home like, the children may talk more freely.

WILLIAM RUSSELL: If you were to put together what you've said with some future, well organized version of something like Dr. Chafe has been talking about and find a cross-cultural difference, do you believe that maybe this will be one way of explaining why these children are perceived as they are by the teacher? Do you think these Indian children might organize and package their language production in some way that would be perceived wrong by the teacher because the teacher's way of doing this may be different.

THELMA WEEKS: I keep hoping for some sort of good model.

WILLIAM RUSSELL (to Wallace Chafe): Does that strike you as any future possibility?

WALLACE CHAFE: I guess the basic problem here is when to talk, when do you use language rather than how you use it. Once I start talking I guess I'm not terribly different.

BILL RUTHERFORD: I'll be talking about some very practical matters that arise at the University of Southern California at the American Language Institute--an Institute designed to teach English to students enrolled at the University who for one reason or another are deemed not yet ready to take University courses. In the classical methods of language teaching which incorporate the focus of classroom attention to matters of structure of the language, there has usually been in the materials available and in the methods used in the class the following organization:

(1) At an early time in the classroom situation there are some ways of exposing the students to elements of the language.

(2) Somehow what the language is made up of has to be shown to the student. Once that has taken place, usually some focus is put on ways of rearranging the elements that he's been exposed to. It has not always been the case that attention to matters of form in the classroom progresses very far beyond that stage.

(3) The student is aware of various ways of saying or writing something, but it's not the case that he is given reasons for choosing among these ways of saying/writing. What can determine such choices are for example:

a. The physical setting--a person can identify himself as, e.g., "It's Bill," "This is Bill" and "I'm Bill." Those are not freely interchangeable depending on where they're used (telephone, door knock, party, etc.).

b. Style--using "so" to connect two thoughts having sequence vs. "therefore" in writing.

c. Social setting--which would determine the selected register.

d. Need for clarity--avoidance of ambiguity.

e. Information conveying--recently it has been pointed out (Loetscher, CLS 10) that a non-restrictive relative clause, although for linguistic purposes semantically "equivalent" to a conjunction of two sentences, would not suffice for certain kinds of communication: the answer to a question asking for the enumeration of characteristics for example.

f. Rhetoric--we recently had a student who wrote a passage like, "Our house had four bedrooms and two sitting rooms. A large garden was in front of the house. My father had

planted a lot of flowers in the garden. These flowers were roses and tulips, etc." A first stage improvement was indicated to the student that the passage might be better as, "Our house had four bedrooms and two sitting rooms. In front of the house was a large garden. In the garden my father had planted a lot of flowers. These flowers were roses and tulips, etc." A second stage of improvement was suggested along the following lines: "Our house had four bedrooms and two sitting rooms. In front of the house was a large garden where my father had planted a lot of flowers, including roses and tulips." In these two examples, one can see, it was a matter of first rearranging the elements in such a way as to be able to collapse them into subordinate clauses, which was the final step. No violations of the rules of syntax had been committed and the word "correction" is not even appropriate for describing what was suggested for the two rewrite stages. In operating on the sentence, the student started with something which was grammatical and ended with a grammatical sentence (where "grammatical" refers simply to the well-formedness of the sentence in isolation). What the student was being led to do, however, was choose among different possible ways expressing a single meaning.

Now the focus of classroom attention upon alternate ways of saying or writing things is nothing new. In textbooks new and old, exercises abound in which the student is required to say or write a sentence in some semantically equivalent but syntactically different version. The term often used in the instructions for such exercises is "transform." Courses are frequently laid out in such a way that the student is "exposed" first to the so-called "basic" forms, then to the various ways in which such forms can be as it were "transformed" or combined. After an ample amount of sentence-level work of this kind the activity that might follow is that in which the student freely expresses himself, whether in speech or in writing. But this free expression, even if grammatical violation is kept to a minimum, invariably produces the kind of jarring effect noted in the first example, where individual sentences appear awkward only in the context within which they've been placed. It is not that the student did not know that it was possible for an English sentence to assume the shape preferred in that particular context; it was that she did not know that there are <u>reasons</u> for preferring one shape over another, in that context or any other.

One of the best informal statements of the criteria by which grammatical constructions are deemed appropriate or not is to be found in the last chapter of that monumental volume by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik entitled <u>A Grammar of Contemporary English</u>. Very briefly, those grammarians point out that there is a general tendency in English to let "old" information come early in a sentence and "new" or salient information come late--the so-called principle of "end Focus." Parallel

to this is another tendency to put "complex" constructions last in a sentence, the so-called principle of "end weight." Furthermore, since what is complex--especially, for example, surface vestiges of underlying sentences--is extremely likely also to be new information, the two principles work with rather than against each other. Applying the principle of end focus to the above example, we can easily see that in the second sentence of that example mention of the house, the old information should come first, and the large garden--the new information--last. What gets the words into their proper positions is a grammar rule that allows us to reverse the two halves of a sentence containing a predicate consisting of a verb of place or direction plus a locative (In the corner stood a clothes tree, Through the streets surged the mob, There lurked the assassin).

What are some of the possible ways in which the student can practice giving proper shapes to sentences, as determined by their positions in discourse? One very obvious technique is simply to let the student choose between alternate sentence arrangements within a supplied context. We might then have exercises where the student chooses among arrangements of a given sentence in context. For example,

Kinesiology has a useful purpose.

a. In order to learn how to analyze the movements of the human body we study it.

b. We study it in order to learn how to analyze the movements of the human body.

Notice here also how a principle of discourse automatically explains a factor of sentence arrangement that would otherwise have to be reduced to grammatical terms: that generally speaking anaphoric elements make for "weak" endings of sentences. Since by definition anaphora cannot represent new information, it will usually not occur at the end of the sentence.

Limitations placed by context upon the choices of sentence arrangement can facilitate the study of grammatical constructions per se. For example, the options provided by the rule of "tough movement" (English is tough to learn/It's tough to learn English) become clearer when put into certain contexts:

What's an easy experiment to perform?

It's easy to (demonstrate that the earth has gravity).

Is it hard to demonstrate that the moon has gravity?

No. That's easy to demonstrate (too).

In the syntax of sentence negation, fronting of the negative element triggers subject-auxiliary inversion, a somewhat complicated operation (She was not only . . . /Not only was she . . .). Fronting is not natural, however, unless the negative attaches to a constituent that can be considered old information, as in the following rewrite:

When hydrogen and chlorine are mixed there is a combustion reaction.

a. You cannot actually see the reaction between the two at any time during the combustion process, however.

b. At no time during the combustion process can you actually see the reaction between the two, however.

In English, extraposition of sentential subjects where no context is specified is almost an obligatory rule (To speak two languages is nice/It's nice to speak two languages). The high probability that a sentential subject will be extraposed is explained by the principle of end weight. Although, as mentioned earlier, the principles of end focus and end weight tend to work together--complex structures usually carrying new information as well, this is not necessarily always the case. Complex structures are sometimes old information, and when this happens the two principles pull against each other. In formal written English the principle of end focus wins out. In these situations, in other words, sentential subjects do not extrapose. The choice for the student could be laid out in the following way:

Dr. Weiss is carefully considering tomorrow's experiment. It [that it might not work] is his opinion at the moment.

Several scientists are of the opinion that tomorrow's experiment may not be successful. That it might not work is also Dr. Weiss's opinion.

The possibilities for sentence arrangement, of course, are endless. The demands of discourse and context can affect, literally, any constituent of the grammar, and in the course of a paragraph adherence to rhetorical principles will require a sequence of sentences whose permutations, inversions, and preposings range over all of syntax. The student can be taught to recognize the choices within this diversity in paragraph layouts where single sentence alternatives occur horizontally and sentence sequence alternatives vertically. A student would draw, as in the following example, a line from top to bottom to connect the end of one sentence to the beginning of its proper successor:

Weathering and erosion of rock exposed to the atmosphere constantly remove particles from the rock.

1.	a.	These rock particles are called sediment.	b.	Sediment is what these rock particles are called.	c. What these rock particles are called is sediment.
2.	a.	The upper layers press down on the lower ones as sediments accumulate.	b.	As sediments accumulate, the upper layers press down on the lower ones.	
3.	a.	- - - - - - - - -	b.	- - - - - - - - -	
4.	etc.				

Strictly speaking, the only part of a paragraph in which there is an actual "choice" of arrangement would be the opening sentence, the internal arrangement of every succeeding sentence being largely determined by what has immediately preceded. But this is precisely one of the selection processes that operates in speaking and writing.

The preceding characterizations of the weight and focus principles are of course an oversimplification, and application of the principles need not be confined to the order of sentence constituents. Similar ends can often be accomplished by means of special stress and intonation. What is important, however, is that for teaching-English-as-a-second-language methodologies which feature the bringing of matters of language structure to the grammatical consciousness of the learner, it is not enough simply to teach the student the various syntactic forms in which any particular meaning can be realized. It is necessary also for the student to know that in practically any linguistic environment the choice among related grammatical forms is not arbitrary, and he should know enough of the principles of sentence arrangement to be able to make his choices appropriate.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm interested in what you do when "weight" and "focus" conflict in the same sentence.

BILL RUTHERFORD: When "weight" and "focus" conflict, focus takes precedence.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can those principles be applied to the construction of a whole discourse as well as just to the construction of sentences within?

BILL RUTHERFORD: I'm very cautious about giving an affirmative answer to that. What I've been saying is not based on a long look at the language.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: There's certainly something going on although it may not be the end-weight and end-focus principles. If you take liberties with the orders of paragraphs, a theme or an article, people get upset, but they don't get nearly as upset as if you had scrambled paragraphs from several different articles. That is maybe a matter of lexical similarity, but on the other hand I'm quite sure there's some sort of sequencing principle that's operative there.

BILL RUTHERFORD: There are other factors that enter in. In a recent article by Susumo Kuno in a book called Subject and Topic, it's pointed out that one of the factors that operates in the selection of what becomes the subject of a sentence is empathy. The speaker will have a tendency to empathize more with himself than with the hearer; more with the subject than the object. And then there were a third set of empathy factors which were, I think, the tendency to empathize more with what is presupposed or what has been given than what is "new."

AUDIENCE MEMBER: There are a couple of studies by Dick Anderson at the University of Illinois on the "organization of memory for verbally presented information." He found the term that's found in the high focus position determines the location in storage. Following the principles that you have outlined, this would ensure that everything was neatly classified in its appropriate place.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Just following this last point, we've collected some data which indicate that the college student prefers to place as a topic in a sentence, a noun element which has been used as the theme in the preceeding paragraph. Particularly if you moved that focused element temporarily in one or two areas, the tendency to want to reassert it as the topic in constructing the next sentence increases and I think that's related to the notion of putting focused information in any important place in the memory structure.

WILLIAM RUSSELL: You mentioned one task: choosing the most appropriate sentence. Has anyone here thought of tasks that one might do, to solve the problem of looking at discourse? Has anyone, for example, gone to the listener to find out if he is doing what he ought to do to conform to the speaker's model of the discourse?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I think there's some work being done by Dave Gordon at the University of California, about speech acts in analyzing "threats" versus "warnings" depending on what the answer to the "threat" or "warning" is.

WILLIAM RUSSELL: There are such a large number of things here to consider that it seems, to get some kind of a working notion, one might take a heavily constrained discourse and vary certain promising aspects to see what kinds of comprehension results you get. Another suggestion would be putting non-perfect (ill-formed) production to the test of comprehension. By that I mean leave things out, don't pronominalize or pronominalize when you think you shouldn't or leave pieces out as in cloze procedure, and then find out what people do on some of these operational tests.

WALLACE CHAFE: I think the things we've all been mentioning and that you just summarized need to have some kind of empirical testing. Some of the devices I mentioned were no more than notional.

CHARLES STRATTON: One of the key questions that faces me as a teacher of both linguistics and composition is how can I as a linguist come to understand those structures and processes of discourse that I teach every day in my composition classes. As a composition teacher I recognize and discuss various modes of discourse (e.g., narrative, expository, procedural, hortatory). As a linguist, however, I am hard pressed to specify the contrasts, variations and distributions of discourses in these modes. In the composition class I teach the organization of basic units into more complex elements and the further organization of these elements into still larger and more complex chunks of discourse. Yet as a linguist I cannot fully identify these basic units and more complex elements of discourse. As a writer and a critic of writing I speak of clarity, coherence, conciseness, vigor and effectiveness, but as a linguist I recognize that these characteristics of writing style have not been adequately dealt with through the scientific study of language.

So I'm left with knowing a lot of things about writing that I don't really understand. As a composition teacher, I know that rhetorical modes and units of discourse and aspects of style do exist, and I know that they can be taught and learned. Even though I don't fully understand them, I know that they have a psychological and cultural reality. I know that my Redeemer liveth, even though I don't pretend to understand all the holy mysteries of Christian faith. My knowledge of discourse phenomena exceeds my understanding of the same, but in no way do I feel that my lack of understanding casts a shadow on the validity of what I profess as an English teacher.

Now this is not to suggest that linguists are unable to deal meaningfully with acts of human communication and are limited to making abstract and theoretical pronouncements about language that have no practical application in the composition classroom. Quite the contrary: there is much to suggest that the aspects of discourse that the rhetorician knows so well are indeed susceptible to linguistic analysis. I am convinced that discourse can be both known and understood by adding the rigor and discipline of linguistics to the insights of rhetoric. I'd like to discuss briefly three aspects of the composition process where studies of discourse linguistics have contributed to my understanding of the process. Admittedly, these three examples are carefully chosen and are not representative of what discourse linguistics has been able to contribute. But they are representative of what linguistic studies of discourse can contribute to our understanding of the composition process, and I hope they might suggest some directions that discourse linguistics studies can take.

Let me start with the way a linguist might look at modes of discourse. To distinguish one mode of discourse from another, we must look to the author's purpose of intention in writing. The purpose of narrative discourse, for instance is to relate a series of events or happenings. The purpose of expository discourse (or more narrowly, definition) is to inform about characteristics and relationships. We can identify similar purposes or functions for other modes. Given these different rhetorical functions of the various modes of discourse, we can go on to identify basic units of rhetorical function for each of the modes. We can identify the EVENT as the basic rhetorical unit of narrative discourse, and we can say that a narrative event is a single action involving one or more participants and occurring in a particular temporal spatial setting. In a like manner, we can identify the ASSERTION as the basic rhetorical unit of expository or definitional discourse, and we can say that an expository assertion is a single relation that holds between two or more entities subject to a specific set of qualifications. We can represent these basic units formulaically as follows:

EVENT = Participants + Action + Setting

ASSERTION = Entities + Relation + Qualifications

Such formulations can help us understand how we identify discourses of different modes. If we study a particular text and find it to consist primarily of a series of event statements (e.g., The train went on up the track out of sight. Nick sat down on the bundle of canvas and bedding. Nick looked at the burned-over stretch of hillside . . . and then walked down the railroad track to the bridge over the river.), we can say it is a narrative discourse. If we look at another text and find it to consist primarily of assertions (These are times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered--the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.), we can be sure that most readers will identify it as an expository discourse.

This analytic approach--this breaking down of discourse texts into constituent elements--helps us bring distinctions into finer and sharper focus. To distinguish narrative from exposition, we distinguish events from assertions. To distinguish events from assertions, we distinguish participants from entities, actions from relations and settings from qualifications. We notice that the participants of narrative events tend to be concrete (the train, Nick, hillside), while the entities of expository assertions tend to be abstract (times, tyranny, conflict, triumph). We notice that narrative actions tend to be encoded with action verbs, often in the past tense (went, sat, looked, walked), while expository relations tend to be encoded with state verbs or action verbs in the present or durative (are, will shrink, is conquered).

Now many an English teacher will say that we haven't really done anything; we haven't told him anything he didn't already know. And he's right. But, I submit, this linguistic approach to discourse of analyzing texts and searching for identificational contrasts and characteristic variations and distributions of discourse elements can, first of all, help us to understand what we already know about rhetorical modes and purposes, and secondly it may even help us come to know some things about discourse that aren't apparent from a subjective evaluation of the gross aspects of discourse in various rhetorical modes.

Next let us look at the question of organization in discourse texts and we see how linguistics and rhetoric can come together to yield something that is unavailable to either separately. To speak of organization presupposes that there is something to be organized: that little chunks of whatever it is we have at hand are gathered together into groups and then ordered within the groups, and then the groups are further gathered and ordered. What are the basic chunks of discourse that participate in this organization process? In the composition class we speak of organizing ideas, yet the linguist insists that in practice we organize clauses and sentences and paragraphs. What is the mechanism that enables a writer to embody these abstract ideas into concrete stretches of language? Obviously the two come together, but how?

The notion of an idea is a semantic concept. A couple of other terms that are often used for this concept are prediction and proposition. The rhetorical units that we considered above are likewise semantic concepts. Events and Assertions are types of semantic Propositions, just as are hortatory Arguments, descriptive Attributions, and procedural Steps. We identify these various kinds of ideas, or propositions, by analyzing them into their component parts and considering the distinctive features of these components.

We also have some linguistic notions: words and sentences, morphemes, phrases and clauses. Semantic propositions are embodied in language as clauses. Words and phrases identify the semantic components of propositions (participants, actions, settings, etc.), just as they make up the linguistic components of clauses (noun phrases, verb phrases, subjects, complements, etc.). Sentences sometimes carry just single propositions, but more often than not (at least in written discourse) several semantic propositions will be embodied between an initial capital and a terminal period.

Discourse, of course, involves both semantic propositions and linguistic clauses. That which we teach about in the composition class has both grammatical or linguistic form and semantic or rhetorical function. It would seem, then, that the basic unit of discourse--that chunk of discourse that is the fundamental participant in the organizational process--has both linguistic and rhetorical aspects: that it is a correlate of linguistic form and rhetorical function. The basic unit of discourse is a linguistic clause that has the rhetorical function of manifesting a semantic proposition.

To say that organization is a matter of getting your ideas together in proper order regardless of the grammatical form they are presented in is unsatisfying because it fails to say how organization is achieved and it fails to say how one organizational scheme is distinguished from another--except in an impressionistic and subjective way. On the other hand, to say that organization or structure in discourse is a matter of lexical chaining and pronominal reference and coordinative conjoining and such like is unsatisfying because it fails to say how one organizational scheme can be more appropriate than another for a particular communication situation. But to say that organizational process has to do with building structures out of units that have both rhetorical function and grammatical form--and to give equal weight to both aspects--is to suggest a way to come to grips with organization in discourse that is both insightful and rigorous.

Finally, let us look at some aspects of writing style--the "packaging" that Professor Chafe talks about--and see some additional ways that linguistics might further our understanding of what we know about the composition process. It can be seen and indeed is apparent to the present speaker that various and sundry writing styles vary in various ways and that certain of the aforementioned variations and varieties of compositionalistic styles are, or at least appear to be, somewhat more effective as regards vehicles for communication than do some others of the said variations and varieties. Which is to say styles differ, and some are better than others. There's no excuse for linguistics to regard these two grammatical sentences as stylistic variants of one another and to suggest that a writer has a free choice between them. There's no need to do so, either.

Consider clarity, for instance. The teacher of composition knows that clarity has to do with organization, but more importantly it has to do with signals of organization--how well the writer makes clear to his readers what the relationships are between and among the ideas that he presents. As a linguist I can talk about patterns of conjoining and embedding and the conventions that are used to signal various patterns. I can point out that clause-level coordinate conjoiners consist of such things as

,and
,but
,or (read "comma and," "comma but," "comma or")

not just the conjunction alone (or the punctuation mark alone, for that matter), for the conjunction alone signals phrase-level conjoining. Something like Bill opened the door comma and signals that a full surface structure clause will follow: something like he carried the groceries inside, or Jane carried the groceries inside. To follow such a signal with a reduced clause like, went into the room (i.e., Bill opened the door, and went into the room) is unclear because the writer has signaled one structure and presented another.

Similarly, I can point out that embedders always come in pairs

( )
, ,
-- --

and that Henry Jones, the president of the bank was transferred to Denver is unclear for the same reason that Henry Jones (the president of the bank) was transferred to Denver is. This seems to me to be much more satisfying than trying to treat punctuation as a matter of grammar and giving students a long list of prescriptive rules and an even longer list of exceptions. Moreover, the same sort of thing is true about sentence adverbials (like similarly, moreover, i.e., for instance). The organization--the logical relationship between the ideas--is the same regardless of whether or not the sentence adverbials are present, but the discourse is much clearer if it includes them. It's not wrong to leave them out, but it's a lot better to include them.

In like manner, the stylistic matter of coherence--how well a set of ideas hang together in a discourse text--is amenable to linguistic analysis. As Professor Chafe and Dr. Rutherford point out, a great deal of what the rhetorician means by coherence can be discussed in terms of the packaging of new and given information or in terms of end focus and end weight.

So, then, it seems that linguistic studies of discourse can further our understanding of such things as rhetorical modes, units of discourse and some aspects of writing style. What will discourse linguistics be able to tell us about the rhetorical triad, writer-reader relationships, point of view, figures of speech, redundancy, consistency, word choice and diction, and on and on? I'm convinced that preliminary results, although sketchy, are promising, and I'm further convinced that discourse linguistics ought to build on what the rhetorician and the teacher of composition already know about discourse in order to pursue a better understanding of these phenomena.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We've been looking at what children do versus what college students do and see that there are some very interesting things that take place in how a child learns to construct a narrative.

At different age levels we have observed various problems. It would be curious to see if you could find any kind of developmental trend in present English through those various stages.

WILLIAM RUSSELL: You're doing this where?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Suny, Platsberg.

WILLIAM RUSSELL: That sounds interesting. I've thought that development was adding one more dimension of difficulty into the whole thing. There is a possibility that that's not true. There's a possibility that by going to the really simple child discourse, we might have a little less to tangle with.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: To identify key differences is what the greatest problem is.

WILLIAM RUSSELL: The staff and I at SWRL have observed the explosion of literature in discourse over the last few years in a dramatic way. For instance, by our criteria for linquistic and psychological dissertations of interest in this area we have found roughly twice as many dissertations in each succeeding year since 1972. (Literature about connected text either oral or written is of course found in many fields other than linguistics and psychology.) In the field of linguistics investigators have now begun to cope with matters they used to dismiss as matters of performance, surface structure, style, etc. This is not simply a matter of expanding interest. It has been found that fundamental theory building in linguistics demands attention to many of these matters.

Whatever the motivation for this wealth of literature, we find it a stimulating source of empirical observations and analytical methods with considerable relevance to our SWRL objective, which is the application of knowledge about such matters to the solution of problems in education.

All of which brings us to the next stage: what can the Discourse Linguistics Group itself do to promote this research trend, communicate findings, and otherwise serve its members? One thing we might begin with is a bibliography of recent discourse literature--perhaps categorized in some useful way with the help of the membership. I have received a large amount of the members' production in my capacity as Chair of the Group and have already sent you a preliminary bibliography of this production. Suggestions from the membership as to other projects are very welcome. I hope the present colloquy in written form will help in some sort of useful exchange during the year.